

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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LABOR SUNDAY MESSAGES

On the 30th of April, Labor Sunday, the Occupational Evangelism Committee of the United Church of Christ in Japan sent out a "message" addressed to all laborers as well as its annual "message" to the churches. The "message" to the churches was read from the pulpits and the message to laborers was distributed by church members to workers living near the churches and their homes. Labor Sunday has been observed since 1954 when it was held on the first Sunday of September. In 1959, it was changed to the Sunday before May Day. In its attempt to reach laborers with the Gospel, the Occupational Evangelism Committee has been holding Area Gospel Labor Schools for the past three years; the graduates of these schools direct special district meetings for laborers. Another effective approach has been through four Labor Institutes, the largest of which is at Hamamatsu, where classes are held from March through August. Well known university professors lecture at these institutes.

The message to the church was as follows: "We, the churches of Japan, have been intrusted with the responsibility to preach the gospel, however, we have never before been faced, so sharply, with the necessity to reflect upon whether we are actually carrying out this responsibility. We are surrounded by problems such as the double structure of large and small enterprises, the rapid

increase and solidification of the low income bracket, the management and labor strife, retreat of the labor movement and the inequality in opportunities for higher education. Is the church in a position where it can bring the gospel of forgiveness of sins through Christ and God's rule to people in the midst of these problems? For example, the number of those attending college is increasing but still only about 50% are able to go beyond the compulsory education level. The presence of many students in night schools calls our attention to the gap between social classes which has become deeply rooted in our society. The Japanese church is said to be a church of the middle class intelligentsia, which means that the church is bringing this gap into its own life. The church must accept its responsibility of service to all age groups, all strata of society and to all occupation groups in local society. When these people are reconciled to God through Christ and encourage one another in their church life, we can say that the church has assumed its God given responsibility toward modern society. We, the Japanese church are seeking for a fundamental change in our posture. Moreover, to arrive at this the church must first be reconciled to God. In commemoration of this Labor Sunday, let us recall the importance of our task and go forward with new resolve."

The "message" to laborers was as follows: "The United Church of Christ in Japan has set the Sunday before May Day as Labor Sunday in order to consider the situation of laborers today and the mission of the church to them. Today, in this time of unusual economic growth, laborers still have a low standard of living, long overtime work without compensation, a high injury rate and are forced to work on holidays. Many in the medium and small enterprises and the home factories are without organization and the basic labor law is disregarded. Temporary workers receive minimum wages and have no future security. There are a great many who do not have a 'healthy, cultural, minimum living standard' as stipulated in the Constitution. We believe that these laborers must be guaranteed such a minimum living standard as soon as possible. The low living standard of those living on the farms, in the mountain areas and in the fishing villages makes us wonder as to why such a situation exists. We, the laborers, have been given the responsibility to discover the conditions for building a new society and to unite our efforts in carrying these out. If we look at the movement to shorten working hours-wherein lies the genesis of May Day, the fact that the laborers fired the fuse in the labor unions fight to shorten working hours, which is the goal of not only the workers but of all classes as well, has a basic significance at a time when the majority of Japanese citizens are striving to maintain their livelihood working more than eight hours a day let alone thinking of a five day work week. Also, if we consider the realization of world peace, it is the laborer who understands that war is an inhuman, mutual killing of humanity, and that, if the capital, material and human energy which are expended in war preparation were to be put into a productive field, the happiness of man would increase by leaps and bounds. Japanese society expects much from the laborer. However, there still remains much outdated thinking in Japanese society. In the midst of a storm of technical innovations and rationalization, there is

not only a failure to establish mutual respect of personality but also a tendency to lose sight of the goal of true human relations. Frankly speaking, this outdated thinking is a fault and a source of grief even within the labor unions administration, united front and labor and management relations. It cannot be said that the labor unions which developed under favorable conditions after the war, are treading a smooth path. Thus it is all the more necessary that the Japanese laborer recognize the dignity of the individual and direct society towards the correct path to improve the situation of the laborer. The Christian world pioneered in social work and labor movements during the Meiji Restoration era but today it is extremely reticent in these areas. We, the Christian World, are not satisfied with this situation and wish to understand the problems of the laborers and work with them in rendering service to Japanese society. As our greeting on this May Day we lay bare our true thoughts and pray for a successful May Day."

MONUMENT ERECTED TO BIBLE TRANSLATORS

The small, quiet, seaside town of Onoura, about 2 hours by car from Nagoya, witnessed the impressive unveiling ceremony of a 1.5 meter natural stone monument erected in memory of Iwakichi, Hisakichi and Otokichi-sailors of the community who assisted Dr. Karl Gutschlaff in the first known translation of a whole book of the Bible into Japanese. At the ceremony General Secretary Miyakoda of the Japan Bible Society related the story of the shipwrecked sailors.

In 1831, the Hojun Maru, while sailing along the coast of Japan, was caught in a fierce storm and sent drifting on the vast Pacific for about a year before it grounded off the coast of British Columbia with only three survivors. Indians held these men as slaves for two years when they were finally rescued by the captain of a Hudson Bay whaler who took them to London.

Eventually, the homesick men managed to get passage to Macao from where they hoped to return to Japan. Here they met Dr. Gutschlaff and helped him in his Bible translation work. The completed work, the Gospel according to St. John, was a very colloquial version and written in "katakana" (the straight-lined Japanese syllabary usually used for writing foreign words.) In 1837, they attempted to return to Japan on the Morrison, an American ship, but were turned back by cannon fire as the feudal government of the time had decreed that there was to be no foreign shipping. The translation proved to be of value in later translations by men such as Hepburn.

Dr. Wilhelm Haas, German ambassador to Japan, unveiled the monument and gave a short address. He noted that the unselfish and devoted efforts of such men as Dr. Gutschlaff and these three sailors are what will bring true peace to the world. The ambassador and his wife were present at the "World Culture and the Bible" lecture meeting at Nagoya that same evening.

HOME AND MARRIAGE SEMINAR

For those contemplating matrimony as well as for those already united, the Christian Home and Family Committee of NCC is planning a seminar on home and marriage. This "first such seminar to be held in Japan" will meet at the beautiful Hoshino hot spring inn located in Karuizawa for two days, July 19 - 20. The seminar is being set up to give spiritual and physical guidance in marriage problems and to help you give this guidance to others. All are cordially invited, however, as facilities are limited the total number of participants must be set at only fifty. You are urged to send in your application as soon as possible to the above mentioned committee at the Kyobunkwan Christian Center. The cost, besides travel, comes to 1,700 yen for room and two meals a day plus 800 yen for seminar fees.

There will be two principal addresses, one by Dr. Kuwada of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary on "A Christian View of Marriage" and the other by Prof. T. Koyama of Toritsu College on "The Present Situation and Trends in Modern Family Life." There will also be a number of shorter talks, each followed by discussion. For the unmarried the following talks have been arranged: "Preparation for Marriage" by Rev. S. Iwamura, "Necessary Sex Information for Young People" by Dr. Narabayashi, "Church and Youth" by Dr. Masao Takenaka and "Pre-Marriage Counselling" by a speaker still to be chosen. The married participants will hear talks on "Human Relations Within the Family" by Rev. Iwamura, "Necessary Sex Information for Married Couples" by Dr. Narabayashi, "Church and Family Problems" by Bishop T. Takase and "Married Life Counselling" by a speaker not yet selected.

There will also be recreation consisting of slides, film strips, library hour, folks songs and a special treat in the form of folk dances directed by Ichiro Suzuki.

SUMMER YOUTH ACTIVITY

The Youth Commission of the NCC announces that the 12th annual Christian Youth Week has been set for May 21 - 28. The general theme will be the New Delhi pre-assembly study theme "Jesus Christ the Light of the World." Area youth committees are in charge of their own programs which will include youth sermons, meetings in the local churches, prayer meetings and bible study.

The Summer Service Project Committee of the aforementioned commission has also announced its 1961 summer projects. From July 17 to August 12 an ecumenical work camp will be located in Hiroshima where the campers will do repair work on the atomic victims hospital and gardens as well as minor repairs on houses of impoverished atomic victims in the city. A high school work camp will be in the northern colony of Sedana, Hokkaido from July 27 - August 10. Also, industries in Osaka will again offer opportunities for "Youth in Industry" from July 22 - August 20.

CORRECTION

An important line was omitted in the previous issue. Please insert "the Association of IBC-Related Schools - which recently replaced" in the fifth line of the fourth paragraph on page five after "Committee."

The April 1 issue listed Masayuki Sawano or being elected General Secretary. This should have been Recording Secretary. Rev. Sawano is General Secretary of the Japan Baptist Domei.

